

Musgrave-sponsored bill would adjust rule for being born an American citizen

By Kate Martin

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Being born on American soil would not guarantee U.S. citizenship if a bill co-sponsored by U.S. Rep. Marilyn Musgrave becomes law.

The bill would require one or both parents to be U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents.

"It's very simple. It just says in order to become a citizen, you just need one parent who's a citizen," said Guy Short, chief of staff for the 4th District Republican.

The bill would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act, Short said. Becoming a citizen when born on U.S. soil, he said, originated from an 1868 law that applied to freed slaves. Musgrave signed on Wednesday as a co-sponsor of H.R. 698.

The bill was introduced in

February by Rep. Nathan Deal, a Georgia Republican. It has 48 co-sponsors, including Rep. Tom Tancredo, a Republican from Colorado's 6th District.

"Right now, it's used as a loophole for illegal immigrants to have children and have them be U.S. citizens," Short said.

Illegal immigrants have a birth rate that is about 50 percent higher than U.S. citizens', according to a press release from Musgrave's staff. Ten percent of all births in the country are to parents who have entered the nation illegally.

Fort Collins immigration attorney Kim Salinas said the bill is "outrageous."

"This won't solve anything," she said. "I think the demographics of our country are changing, and that's something people are uncomfortable with."

Salinas said the bill doesn't make any sense.

"The parent doesn't qualify for anything by virtue of the birth of a child," Salinas said. "Citizenship by birth is a pretty basic concept, and it's an idea that's shared by most nations."

Republican state Rep. Jim Welker of Loveland said the bill is a step in the right direction.

"It sounds like a reasonable proposal," he said. "Quite a large number of people come here just to have their baby born."

Welker recently returned from a trip to the U.S.-Mexico border. He spent a few nights with the Minutemen, a volunteer group dedicated to preventing illegal immigration.

He stressed that immigration is a safety issue, not a racial one.